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Forward to *Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State* by Ron Paul

Sheldon Richman's [*Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State*](#) is precisely the type of scholarly work needed to wake up the American people to the dangers posed by the welfare state. Richman demolishes the popular myth that the welfare state was a natural outgrowth of the Founding Fathers' conception of individual liberty. In fact, the ideology behind the welfare state is a 180-degree turn from the individualism embraced by the Founders. The men who led the American Revolution and drafted the Constitution understood that people flourish best under conditions of freedom — and that a centralized state has neither the legitimate authority nor the competence to care for the needy. Instead, the Founders realized that a state which attempts to provide security will end up destroying both liberty and the economic prosperity necessary to enhance individual security.

In contrast, the theoreticians of the welfare state believe that people are incapable of improving their condition and would ultimately become little more than pawns of the “greedy capitalists” without the support of a wise and benevolent state. Of course, while redistributionism and its nasty cousins — socialism, communism, and fascism — have created many shortages, one thing it has produced in abundance is power-hungry politicians eager to protect the people from the forces of private greed!

In fact, as Richman points out, one of the prime motivations of Bismarck, who created the prototype of the modern welfare state, was to use taxpayer monies to bribe the citizens into supporting his imperial regime. The use of the welfare state to cement popular support for the incumbent government remains intact. As a United States congressman, I regularly see how prevalent the welfare state mentality is among elected officials who use the tool of redistribution as a means to “buying votes” with the taxpayers' own money.

One of the most powerful arguments used by those who would expand the welfare state is that absent government-provided welfare the lives of the poor would be “nasty, brutish and short.” Richman demolishes this argument by showing how voluntary charities and organizations, such as friendly societies that devoted themselves to helping those in need, flourished in the days

before the welfare state turned charity into a government function. Today, government welfare programs have supplemented the old-style private programs. Many private charities have become seduced by the siren song of taxpayer funding into becoming little more than appendages of the welfare bureaucracy. One of the most disturbing trends of recent years is the attempt by many so-called conservatives to entice the remaining independent charities into government dependency under the guise of expanding access to “faith-based” institutions. Of course, entanglement with the dependency-fostering welfare state will destroy the very attributes that make these institutions effective — freedom from government infiltration and regulation.

While freedom charities promote self-reliance, government welfare programs foster dependency. In fact, it is in the self-interests of the bureaucrats and politicians who control the welfare state to encourage dependency. After all, when a private organization moves a person off welfare, the organization has fulfilled its mission and proved its worth to donors. In contrast, when people leave government welfare programs, they have deprived federal bureaucrats of power and of a justification for a larger amount of taxpayer funding.

As effective as this book is in showing the harm done by our current welfare policies, it would be a mistake to lump Richman in with those writers who condemn the welfare state’s cost and corrosive effects on society in order to build a case for making the welfare state more “efficient.” Unlike many policy analysts Richman does not ignore the fundamental immorality behind the welfare state, which is, after all, built on theft. If it is wrong to rob Peter to pay Paul, how can it be right to levy taxes on Peter to pay Paul?

By tracing the history of the welfare and detailing how redistributionism damages both taxpayer and the recipient of government “aid,” Sheldon Richman has produced a book that is essential reading for any American wishing to understand how the welfare state is incompatible with constitutional government and a free society. Such understanding is the first step toward reclaiming liberty. For only when the American people fully understand how damaging the welfare state is to both the nation’s economy and its moral character will the welfare state join other forms of statism on the ash heap of history.

All lovers of freedom have reason to be grateful to Sheldon Richman for his excellent work and to the Future of Freedom Foundation for publishing it.

*Ron Paul is a U.S. Congressman from Texas and a candidate for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination. This is his foreward to [**Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State**](#) by Sheldon Richman, published by The Future of Freedom Foundation in 2001.*